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**PSYCHOLOGICAL HOPE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS OF STUDENTS  
IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES.**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study examined the relationship between psychological hope and students' entrepreneurial intentions. The sample for the study consists of 305 students from the five Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, and data was collected through a cross-sectional survey. The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 15 were used for data analysis. The findings revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between psychological hope and students' entrepreneurial intentions in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Specifically, students willpower (agency) and way power (pathways) were revealed to have a positive and statistically significant influence on students' entrepreneurial intentions in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study concludes that psychological hope plays a significant role in enhancing students' entrepreneurial intentions in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Specifically, the study concludes that students' willpower (agency) and way power (pathways) play significant roles in enhancing their entrepreneurial intentions in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The theoretical and managerial implications of these findings were also discussed.*

**Keywords: Psychological Hope, Entrepreneurial Intentions, Students, Niger Delta Region, Nigeria.**

**1.0 CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM**

Today, everyone seems to agree that entrepreneurship is the way to go for both individuals and economies all over the world. According to Lemmon, (2011) "entrepreneurship seems to have become the silver bullet for a job-scarce, unemployment-saddled global economy still struggling to shake off a severe recession." Similarly, Isenberg (2010) states that "economic studies around the globe consistently link entrepreneurship, particularly the fast-growth variety, with job creation, GDP growth, and long-term productivity." In the U.S., for example, start-ups create more than 70 per cent of new jobs. In Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East, testimonies abound that point to the power of small businesses to move economies and regions from poverty to economic prosperity. The Rwandan story is striking. Rwanda's government took a strongly interventionist strategy in the post-genocide years, identifying three local industries (coffee, tea, and tourism) that had proven potential for development and actively organized institutions that would support those industries, to provide employment to millions of people. The result is impressive. About 72,000 new ventures, tripled exports in a decade, and a 25% reduction in poverty. As Lerner and Sahlman (2012) point out, America's economic culture has traditionally

been distinguished by a willingness to pursue opportunities; a parallel willingness to adopt new products and services; social, legal, and economic tolerance for failure; and the ability to efficiently redeploy people and money. All this has led to a highly evolved system for allocating human and financial capital to entrepreneurial ventures, which has brought the U.S. enormous advantage.

Hence, the decision of the government in Nigeria to embark on an all-out move to encourage Nigerians to embrace entrepreneurship is a welcome development. The idea is for people to seek to employ themselves, and also employ others, rather than seek non-existent paid employment with the government and big companies. Among the many actions taken by the government to encourage entrepreneurship development in Nigeria are (1) the introduction of compulsory entrepreneurship education for all undergraduate students in tertiary educational institutions in the country; (2) the initiation and financing of aggressive entrepreneurship advocacy involving the private sector, non-profit organizations, professional bodies and Universities; (3) the enactment of relevant laws that will pave the way for easy starting and conduct of business; (4) the creation of specialized agencies and institutions, and schemes that assist current and would-be entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses, such as the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), the Nigeria Export/Import Bank (NEXIM), the Bank of Industry, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Small and Medium Enterprises Investment Equitiescheme (SMEIES), and the Dragon Project, a business idea competition reality show. The government expects that as many students as possible, if not all the students, who have gone through entrepreneurship education will go into business after graduation. To buttress this point, Schramm (2012) has made the call for expanding the entrepreneur class. "The world needs more entrepreneurs: They make innovation real and advance what Brink Lindsey, of the Kauffman Foundation, has called the 'frontier economy'." He goes further to argue that "If their ranks are too thin, it is the failure of society-particularly because the knowledge and skills of a successful entrepreneur can be taught."

While commending the efforts of the Nigerian government and those of the governments of many other developing countries in promoting entrepreneurship education, the business climate in Nigeria and many other developing countries remains unattractive and inhibitive as businesses face myriad challenges such as poor electricity and other social overheads, poor access to credit, very high and multiple taxes, difficulty in enforcing contracts, insecurity of investment and lives, among others. This situation, which has led to the closure of many big and small businesses, also scares the hell out of would-be businesspeople. The 2012 World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business Report" ranks Nigeria 133rd out of 183 economies. Analysts say that this implies that Nigeria lags behind 132 other countries in terms of how easy the regulatory, social, and physical environment permits the start and conduct of business and, rationally, people will be less willing to invest their capital in Nigeria, a country they consider unsafe. This calls for more action on the part of everyone concerned, especially the government. The question then becomes: how many of them have the psychological fitness to do so? Given the stories they hear about early failures of current businesspeople, can we predict how many of them will be willing to take the risk of investing for future success and independence instead of playing safe and seeking ready "security" from paid employment? How might the resourcefulness of our young ones be promoted in the face of hardship and a hostile environment? If the dreams and efforts of

the government are to be realized, then, these questions and more need to be asked and answered.

A comprehensive review of entrepreneurship and management literature by Linana et al. (2004) reveals, however, that social scientists have not yet agreed on the determinants of the decision to become an entrepreneur. They emphasised that over the years, the decision to become an entrepreneur has been analysed using very different methodologies. Authors began looking for the existence of certain personality traits that could be associated with entrepreneurial activity (McClelland, 1961). Later on, other studies have pointed to the importance of different demographic variables/characteristics such as age, gender, origin, religion, level of studies, labour experience, and so on (Reynolds et al., 1994; Storey, 1994). Both lines of analysis have allowed the identification of significant relationships among certain traits or demographic characteristics of the person and the fulfilment of entrepreneurial behaviours. However, the predictive capacity has been very limited (Reynolds, 1997). From the theoretical point of view, those approaches have been criticized (Gartner, 1989; Robinson et al., 1991; Krueger et al., 2000; Liñána et al., 2002), both for their methodological and conceptual problems and for their low explanatory capacity. From a third perspective, since the decision to become an entrepreneur may be plausibly considered voluntary and conscious (Krueger et al., 2000), it seems reasonable to analyze how that decision is taken. In this sense, entrepreneurial intention would be a previous and determinant element towards performing entrepreneurial behaviours (Fayolle and Gailly, 2004; Kolvereid, 1996). In turn, the intention to carry out a given behaviour will depend on the person's attitudes towards that behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). A more favourable attitude would increase the intention of carrying it out. In this manner, this “attitude approach” would be preferable to those traditionally used, such as the trait or the demographic approaches (Robinson et al., 1991; Krueger et al., 2000).

Thus, attitudes measure the extent to which an individual positively or negatively evaluates something. Attitudes are relatively stable, but they change according to time and situation. Therefore, there is some concern that policies may not be sufficiently efficient in achieving this objective. From a psychological point of view, the intention to become an entrepreneur has been described as the single best predictor of actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Kolvereid, 1996). Hence, it would be reasonable to analyse the entrepreneurial intention and its psychological determinants, thanks to the availability of a validated instrument to measure abilities, attitudes and psychological variables such as hope and intentions towards entrepreneurship.

At times like this, people must look inwards and beyond to tap from some resources which were ignored hitherto. As Philosopher Theocritus said: “While there’s life there’s hope, and only the dead have none.” The fact is that in Theocritus’ time, things may not have been as difficult as they are with us today, yet he was forced to make that popular, consolatory statement. When faced with very difficult scenarios such as the ones we have painted above, some people keep going with hope, but others give up and resign to environmental determinism. In other words, they lose hope and do nothing.

Recently a cognitive-based theory of hope developed within the field of positive psychology has been discussed about organizational leadership. Shorey and Snyder (1997 and 2004) have presented hope as a common process in leadership and hope is now included in

emerging concepts and models of leadership. This pioneering work has only just begun and there are many unanswered questions regarding the "processes by which leaders influence hope in followers," (Avolio et al., 2004). Hope in this context can be described as a positive motivational state that contributes to leaders and followers expending the requisite energy necessary to pursue and attain organizational goals. To further understand the hope-leadership linkage the authors identify linkages between hope and theories of motivation, goal setting and goal pursuit commonly applied in leadership studies.

From the above discussion, it is obvious that there have been a significant number of studies on the concepts of psychological hope and entrepreneurial intention. This growth of scholarly activity within the organizational framework is among the most significant developments in the sociology of knowledge. Yet despite a background of intensive studies on the subject of entrepreneurial development, something remains lacking: firstly, relative to the other POB concepts in the CHOSE framework (see Luthans, 2002a), hope has been given the least attention. Yet, because hope meets the POB criteria of being state-like (as well as dispositional (see Snyder, 2000) and thus open to development (see Luthans and Jensen, 2002a), has a valid measure of 'State Hope' (Snyder et al., 1996), and at least considerable indirect and beginning direct evidence of being related to leadership effectiveness and employee performance, hope would seem to be exactly the type of positive psychological capacity for OB that is needed to be further explored and applied. Since hope has been empirically shown to influence various other desirable organizational outcomes as discussed above, we also expect that the same level of influence will be extended to the concept of students' entrepreneurial intentions. Secondly, there has been no known study to examine whether or not psychological hope could explain the entrepreneurial intentions of students in general and in the Nigerian context (undergraduates in Nigerian Universities) in particular.

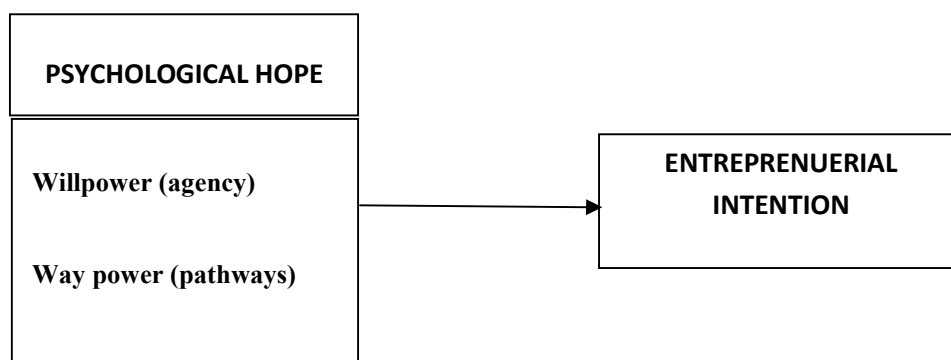
To fill this gap in the literature, this study examines the relationship between students' state of psychological hope and their entrepreneurial intentions in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Based on the theory of planned behaviour, this study specifically seeks to find out how many Nigerian undergraduates would find it desirable and feasible to go into business after graduation in light of prevailing environmental circumstances, and the role that hope plays in that decision.

Judging from organizational research that is either underway or completed, hope is seen as a factor in human and social capital management, referred to as positive psychological capital (Luthans and Youssef, 2004); hope plays a role in sustaining innovation during major changes such as mergers and acquisitions (Ludema and colleagues, in progress). The impact of high hope human resources on profits, retention rates, follower satisfaction and commitment (Adams et al., 2003; Luthans and Jensen, 2003); the differences in hope levels among social workers and corresponding levels of stress, job satisfaction, commitment and performance (Kirk and Koeske, 1995); and the development of positive organizational hope and its impact on organization citizenship behaviours (White-Zappa, 2001), are well articulated. Based on the above, the basic assumption in this paper is that psychological hope and entrepreneurial intention could also be related. As such, the basic question guiding this study is: what is the nature of the relationship between psychological hope and entrepreneurial intention among students in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria?

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### Conceptual Framework

The figure below presents to conceptual framework for this study.



*Source: conceptualized by the researchers*

**Figure: A Conceptual Framework Showing the Hypothesized Relationship between Psychological Hope and Entrepreneurial Intention of Students in Selected Nigerian Universities.**

## 2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### THE CONCEPT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HOPE DEFINED

As we gathered materials for this piece, we stumbled on a wristband, used as a promotional item by a confectioneries firm, which read: “Great hopes make great men”. According to Greek mythology, Clinton (2010) the first woman on earth, Pandora, was given a box that she was not to open under any circumstance. Too curious to resist, she opened, and all the evils of the world flew out: hate, pain, destructiveness, starvation, envy. When Pandora saw what she had done, she closed the box before the last thing in there could escape. That last thing was hope.

So many great men, in ancient and contemporary times, have commented on this concept of hope. President Barack Obama in his book “The Audacity of Hope,” assures that the American dream can be realized, no matter the situation. On his part, Francis Bacon argued that “hope is a good breakfast, but it is a bad supper. Alexandre Dumas believes that “until the day when God will desire to reveal the future to man, all human wisdom is contained in these two words: wait and hope.” Thomas Jefferson stated: “I steer my bark with Hope in the head, leaving fear astern. My hopes, indeed, sometimes fail; but not oftener than the foreboding of the gloomy.” For William Shakespeare, “True hope is swift and flies with swallows’ wings; Kings it makes gods and meaner creatures kings.” You must be familiar now with the words of Theocritus who said, “While there’s life there’s hope, and only the dead have none. Since the late 20th century, further explorations of the concept of hope as a mechanism for improvement of mental health, physical well-being and personal success took root among researchers,

specifically clinicians in psychology, medicine, life-counselling and recently positive organisational behaviour (Helland and Winston, 2005).

What then is hope? Hope is the emotional state which promotes the belief in a positive outcome related to events and circumstances in one's life. It is the "feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best" or the act of "looking forward to with desire and reasonable confidence" or "feeling that something desired may happen". Other definitions are "to cherish a desire with anticipation"; "to desire with expectation of obtainment"; or "to expect with confidence". In the English language the word can be used as either a noun or a verb, although hope, as a concept, has a similar meaning in either use (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Empirical evidence indicates that hopeful employees tend to be independent thinkers. Luthans, *et al.*, (2007) contend that they feel less constrained/conformed by the ideas of other people and the leaders, thus being more prone to see "out of the box" and to propose creative ideas for solving problems and taking advantage of opportunities. In an earlier study that examined the concept of hope in parents of critically ill newborns. Amendolia, (2010) posits that hope is a human phenomenon that is observed repeatedly in the neonatal intensive care unit setting and defines hope as "the belief that circumstances in the future will be better. It is not a wish that things will get better, but an actual belief, even if there may be no evidence that anything will change. Hope can encompass a wide variety of beliefs- everything from a high school student hoping for an A in algebra to a cancer patient hoping for a cure, even when scientists are nowhere near finding a cure."

Hopeful individuals are more open to different kinds of information and look at problems and opportunities from different angles (Zhou and George, 2003). Being resolute in pursuing goals, they are risk-takers and look for alternative pathways when the old ones are blocked (Snyder, 1994, 2002). They use self-talk agency phrases such as "I can do it", "this is very interesting", "I am ready for this challenge" and "I am not going to be stopped", thus enjoying goal pursuit, being more intrinsically motivated and looking for creative ways when implementing their "agency energy (Amabile, 1998; Shalley and Gilson, 2004; Snyder, 2002). Hopeful people do not only act for goal achievement, they also inject some uncertainty into a goal situation that may seem certain (and reachable) to observers (Snyder, 2002). For example, when tasks feel easy, they "change the rules" (Snyder, 2002) to stretch their skills (e.g., they set shorter deadlines or demand new pathways for themselves). This is what happens with some basketball players, who not only try to put the ball in the hoop but also pursue the goal with flair and uniqueness (Jones, 1973; Snyder and Fromkin, 1980). Therefore, it is likely that they inject creativity into their working activities and goals to stretch and develop their skills and to reach goals in distinctive ways. The seemingly unreachable goals become reachable for them (Snyder, 2002), maybe because they call for their creativity to reach what seems unattainable for others. When goals are not attained, they use such feedback to improve goal-pursuit thoughts and strategies, thus being more energetic and prone to look for alternative and creative ways to overcome obstacles. It is less likely that they lose patience or get frustrated when facing difficulties in dealing with problems and opportunities.

As Luthans *et al.*, (2007) have argued, "Hopeful employees tend to be creative and resourceful, even with tight budgets". On the contrary, low-hope people are less flexible thinkers

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and less prone to produce alternate routes for solving problems and taking advantage of opportunities (Snyder, 1994, 2002). The lower agency energy makes them less motivated for goal pursuit, thus being less energized to look for creative ways to reach them. They are more likely to conform to organizational rules and to be obedient to their bosses (Luthans *et al.*, 2007), thus being less prone to propose creative ideas that go against the status quo and/or their bosses' opinions. With their perceptions of deficient agency and pathways, they probably approach a given goal with a focus on failure rather than success (Snyder, 1995), thus being less energized for pursuing the goal and looking for creative ways to reach it. What looks possible for high-hope people looks unviable for them, and this makes them less prone to improvise and create alternative pathways for solving problems and taking advantage of opportunities. Feedback from goal non-attainment is not used to improve future efforts, but instead produces rumination and self-doubt (Michael, 2000; Snyder, 1999; 2002), leading to lower intrinsic motivation, negative emotions and less creative efforts for goal pursuit.

Hope theory (Snyder, Irving and Anderson, 1991) developed within the field of positive psychology has recently provided researchers with a definition of hope that is clear and measurable. Hope theory defines hope as, "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)." In other words, hope is not just an emotion, it is a dynamic, powerful, and pervasive cognitive process that is observable across numerous contexts including that of formal organizations.

### **Dimensions of Hope**

The last two decades have witnessed the development of a theoretical model of hope which has greatly influenced researchers in the field of positive psychology. Rather than emphasizing the emotional aspects of hopefulness, C.R. Snyder conceptualized hope as a cognitive construct which reflects people's motivation and capacity to strive toward personally relevant goals (Snyder, 1994; Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon, 2002). Although used in everyday language, as in 'hope for the best', hope as a positive psychology construct is precisely, and operationally defined. Mainly through the theory and research of clinical, positive psychologist C. R Snyder, hope is defined as a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of success: (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)' (Snyder *et al.*, 1991). Thus, hope depends on two cognitions in particular: agency thinking and pathways thinking. Agency thinking refers to people's perceived ability to pursue goals despite obstacles and is evident in self-statements such as, "I can do this" and "I am not going to be stopped." On the other hand, pathways thinking refers to people's perceived ability to generate plausible routes toward goals and is evident in self-statements such as "I can find a way to get this done." It is this duality of both willpower (agency) and way power (pathways) that sets apart hope as a positive psychological capacity from the common usage of the term and other conceptually close positive constructs such as self-efficacy or optimism.

In particular, the willpower dimension of hope is similar to efficacy expectancies and the pathway dimension is conceptually close to efficacy outcome expectancies. The difference, however, is that while Bandura (1997) argues that the efficacy expectancies are all-important, Snyder (2000) treats the agency and the pathways as equally important, operating in a combined,

iterative manner. Again, there is a conceptual difference between hope and optimism in that optimism expectancies are formed through others and forces outside the self (Seligman's 1998 explanatory attribution style), while hope is initiated and determined through the self (Snyder, 2000). The same analysis can be made of other conceptually similar constructs such as goal setting or positive affectivity. These and others either emphasize the agency or the pathways, but not both equally as does hope. Studies have clearly shown that hope has discriminant validity among positive psychological constructs (Magaletta and Oliver, 1999; Scioli et al., 1997).

Considerable research has supported the notion that hope is dependent on both agency and pathways thinking, that these components of hope can be validly measured, and that hopeful individuals enjoy many benefits not experienced by their low-hope counterparts including superior academic achievement, psychological adjustment, and physical health (Arnau et al., 2010).

### **ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS**

The role of intentions has been acknowledged to be relevant in both the management literature in general and entrepreneurship literature in particular (Sutton, 1998; Bird, 1988). It has been observed that intentions have the ability to predict both individual behaviours (Ajzen, 1991), and organizational outcomes such as survival, development and growth (Mitchel, 1981). Hence, the need and capability to understand and predict intentions becomes a point of interest for both managers and entrepreneurs (Tubbs and Ekeberg, 1991).

Most scholars who have studied or written on entrepreneurship have focused on intentions (Bird, 1988; Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud, 2000). This is particularly so as intentions are the best predictors of individual behaviours especially when the behaviour is rare, hard to observe or involves unpredictable time lags (Krueger and Brazeal, 1994). The establishment of new ventures and the creation of new value in existing ones, which have been identified by Bird (1988) as the two outcomes of entrepreneurial intentions, are good examples of such behaviours.

Bird (1988) and Shane and Venkataraman (2000) support the view that the two objectives (or goals) that mainly characterize entrepreneurship are the establishment of new independent firms and the creation of new value in existing ones. In line with this view, we define entrepreneurial intention as a cognitive representation of the actions to be implemented by individuals to establish new independent ventures, buy or inherit existing companies and create new values through them.

### **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

The extant literature outlines a variety of factors as responsible for the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. Scholars have grouped them into two macro-categories: the individual and the contextual domains (Bird, 1988 in Fini, et al. 2009). The individual domain consists of demographic characteristics or personal traits, psychological characteristics, individual skills and prior knowledge, individual networks and social ties. The contextual domain consists of environmental support, environmental influences and organizational factors. In the discussion that follows we examine each of these factors comprising the two identified domains (Ajzen, 1987 in Fini, et al. 2009).

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Demographics characteristics- Individual characteristics such as educational level, age, gender, marital status, employment status, etc. have been examined to identify the factors responsible for the formation of entrepreneurial intention. The earlier study by Reynolds, et al (2002) indicates that men in the United States are twice as likely as women to be in the process of starting a new business. The earlier study by Boyd (1990) also shows that age correlated positively with entrepreneurial intention. More specifically, the study of Bates (1995) demonstrates that the intention, and as a result the likelihood to be entrepreneurial, increases with age, peaking as people approach age 40 and then levelling out. Evans and Leighton (1989), in their study on ethnicity, show that married individuals are more likely to get engaged in entrepreneurial activities than single individuals.

Psychological characteristics, which are individual dimensions that can change as a result of influences coming from social relations, and organizational and environmental exposure, have also been studied and found to influence entrepreneurial intention. The first attempt to study the willingness and drive of individuals to get engaged in entrepreneurial activities can be traced back to the psychological studies of Atkinson (1957) and McClelland (1961) who introduced the need-for-achievement concept. McClelland (1961) argued that individuals with a high level of need for achievement show higher willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Individuals' risk-taking propensity, which is another psychological dimension, has been shown to influence entrepreneurial intention (Stewart and Roth, 2001), tolerance of ambiguity (Budner, 1982), and locus of control (Evans and Leighton, 1989).

The influence of individual skills and prior knowledge on entrepreneurial intentions has also been given attention by management scholars. Wiklund and Shepherd (2003) argue that both entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours can be conceptualized as functions of entrepreneurs' abilities. Background and skills accumulated by each entrepreneur are, in fact, predictors of entrepreneurial activities. Roberts and Fusfeld (1981) argue that a high level of managerial skills is a requirement for individuals involved in high-technology firms; while Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) state that technical and procedural skills are fundamental in knowledge-intensive entrepreneurial environments.

The influence of social capital on entrepreneurial intention has also been investigated. The findings of Aldrich, (1999) revealed that by structuring the context in which entrepreneurs must act, social networks affect entrepreneurial intentions. In the extant literature, social ties and networks have also been identified as dimensions responsible for individual entrepreneurship intention. Network analysts argue that entrepreneurship is a consequence of taking the opportunity to be the tertius, to be between others (Burt, 1992). More specifically they find that the combination of high network centrality and extensive bridging ties strengthens the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance.

It is relevant to note that entrepreneurial activities may also be explained by the influences of the surrounding business environment. Scholars have emphasized that such contextual factors as characteristics of the local context (e.g. availability of logistic infrastructure, financial investors, and externalities) government policies, and, more specifically, university support mechanisms influence entrepreneurial activities (Morris and Lewis, 1995; Fini et al., 2008) as having the potentials of influencing entrepreneurial intentions. For example, governments may intervene by way of funding schemes, tax policies and other support

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mechanisms that are aimed at mitigating market inefficiencies and promoting entrepreneurship (Lerner, 1999).

Some other scholars have emphasized the predictive power that the environment has on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours (Wiklund and Sheperd, 2003; Wiklund, 1999). With specific regard to the creation of new independent ventures, scholars have shown that start-ups are not evenly distributed across all high-technology industries: biotechnology and computer software are the two most common industries in the United States (Lowe, 2002). Industry characteristics may drive individuals' entrepreneurial intentions.

On the other hand, psychological hope has been shown to influence several organisational outcomes. Using a sample of 78 adolescents diagnosed with cancer who were recruited from two pediatric oncology clinics, Hendricks-Ferguson (2008) examined the relationships between hope and spiritual well-being (SWB) -and its dimensions, religious well-being (RWB) and existential well-being (EWB) - to time since diagnosis among adolescents with cancer and found that adolescents in the first two time periods reported significantly higher levels of SWB, RWB, and EWB than those in subsequent periods. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that hope did not significantly vary over time; and that time since diagnosis may influence adolescents' levels of SWB and its dimensions during the cancer experience. Based on the findings above, Hendricks-Ferguson (2008) recommends, among others, that adolescents' use of SWB, RWB, and EWB as coping resources should be examined in longitudinal studies from diagnosis through survivorship. On their part, Benzein and Saveman (1998) posit that hope is an essential concept in nursing which has not been satisfactorily explored. The purpose of their study was to elucidate the concept of hope, using a technique of concept analysis described by Walker and Avant, (1995). The critical attributes revealed were: orientation, intentionality, positive expectation, realism, goal-setting, activity, and inter-connectedness. Fitzgerald, (2007) examined critical dimensions of hope as well as hope antecedents and threats that provide direction for nursing intervention and argued that conceptualizations of hope influence one's view of "false hope." The study also discussed specific challenges to nurses related to hope inspiration that are present at the end of life and summarised hope-inspiring strategies for persons at the end of life.

Besides the obvious implications that hope has in the clinical psychology and health fields, in recent years there has been growing evidence that hope has a positive influence on academic and athletic performance (Curry, et al. 1997; Onwuegbuzie and Snyder, 2000). Psychological hope has been shown to have the most unique POB capacity. The empirical evidence also indicates that an individual's level of hope is related to goal expectancies, perceived control, and positive affect (Curry et al., 1997). Additionally, there is initial research showing those with hope in stressful jobs such as human services do better (Kirk and Koeske, 1995; Simmons and Nelson, 2001), and even a couple of workplace studies that examine the impact on performance (Adams et al., 2002; Peterson and Luthans, 2002). However, relative to the other POB concepts in the CHOSE framework (see Luthans, 2002a), hope has been given the least attention. Yet, because hope meets the POB criteria of being state-like (as well as dispositional (see Snyder, 2000) and thus open to development (see Luthans and Jensen, 2002a), has a valid measure of 'State Hope' (Snyder et al., 1996), and at least considerable indirect and

beginning direct evidence of being related to leadership effectiveness and employee performance, hope would seem to be exactly the type of positive psychological capacity for OB that is needed to be further explored and applied.

Since hope has been empirically shown to influence various other desirable organizational outcomes as discussed above, we also expect that the same level of influence will be extended to the concept of students' entrepreneurial intentions. Hence, we hypothesize that:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the student's psychological state of hope and their entrepreneurial intention.

**Ho<sub>1a</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the students' willpower and their entrepreneurial intention.

**Ho<sub>1b</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the students' way power and their entrepreneurial intention.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** This study adopts a triangulation of methodologies since no single methodology will adequately enable a full understanding of human beings- the subject of our study. We believe, for example, that human beings are both creators and creatures of their environment. Thus, while the nomothetic approach (questionnaire) was the dominant method and provided the basis for the analysis of objective accounts, the ideographic approach (interview) enabled us to incorporate the subjective accounts of situations. This study adopted the quasi-experimental or ex post facto research design. This is particularly so as it is the most appropriate for research in the administrative sciences (Baridam, 2001), where the researcher has no control over variables in the sense of manipulating them (Cooper and Schindler, 2001:136). More specifically, we shall employ the cross-sectional survey which has become popular in social/administrative science research for many reasons including (1) it is budget and time-effective, (2) it is perceived to be more anonymous and, (3) it allows respondents time to think about the questions. It will be relevant to note that the cross sectional survey or the survey design is a process whereby standardized information is collected from a representative sample of a particular group or population. To complement data obtained using a cross-sectional survey (questionnaire), a series of unstructured interview questions will be put to some of the respondents to gain more insights into the issues.

**Sampling Procedure:** A total of three hundred and fifty-two (352) copies of the questionnaire were sent out to Undergraduate Students of the five Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The sample for the study was done using Taro Yamen's formula suggested in Baridam (2001). A total of three hundred and five (305) sets of the questionnaire were returned and used for analysis. The respondents were assured confidentiality of their responses and were also promised a soft copy of the research report as an incentive for responding to the research instrument.

**Operational Measures of The Variables:** The independent variable in this study is hope. Based on the work of Snyder et al., (1996, 2000), the dimensions of hope include willpower (agency) and way power (pathways). Willpower or agency thinking refers to people's perceived ability to pursue goals despite obstacles and is evident in self-statements such as, "I can do this" and "I am not going to be stopped." On the other hand, way power or pathways

thinking refers to people's perceived ability to generate plausible routes toward goals and is evident in self-statements such as "I can find a way to get this done." The concept of hope was measured using the Adult Hope Scale (AHS) by Snyder. Individuals were asked to report their hope via the State Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1996). Small adjustments were made to adapt the items to the work context. For example, the item "If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it" was replaced by "If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it". These dimensions of hope were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The response mode ranges from 1-5; where 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure/neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.

The agency (willpower) subscale score is derived by summing items 2, 9, 10, and 12; the pathway (way power) subscale score is derived by adding items 1, 4, 6, and 8. The total Hope Scale score is derived by summing the four agency and the four pathway items. The response mode ranges from 1-5; where 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure/neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. *Note.* When administering the scale, it is called The Future Scale.

On the other hand, the dependent variable in this study is entrepreneurial intention. This variable is measured using an Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ), which has been recently validated (Francisco, et al. 2004). This enabled us to measure entrepreneurial intentions in a sample of students in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Subjects responded using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1-5, where 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure/neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. There are six (6) items measuring the concept of entrepreneurial intention (see appendix).

**Test of Validity and Reliability:** Several steps were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of this study. To assess the validity of the survey instrument, copies of the questionnaire were given to two seasoned professionals in the field of Organizational Behaviour and Management. Copies of the questionnaire were also given to some of our colleagues and practising managers. They were allowed time to go through the questionnaire and make suggestions and/or criticisms that were appropriate. These suggestions and/or criticisms were noted by the researchers and used to modify the instrument. Hence, it would be safe to say that the survey instrument has face and content validity. The experts also confirmed that sampling validity was adequately achieved in the higher educational institutions that were used for this study.

To ensure reliability, two major steps were taken. Firstly, data were triangulated by using multiple sources. Secondly, the internal reliability of the survey instrument was assessed using Cronbach alpha coefficients, using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Hence, only the items that return alpha values of 0.7 and above were considered.

**Data Analysis Technique:** To empirically evaluate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of this study (including their components), the Spearman Rank Statistical Technique was employed, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The choice of Spearman's rho is informed by its amenability to the type or level of data that was collected.

#### 4.0 RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

To be able to empirically ascertain the relationship between Hope and Entrepreneurial Intention, our hypotheses were subjected to statistical tests using the data so collected. The table below indicates the results of the Regression Analysis between the independent variable (Hope) and the dependent variable (Entrepreneurial Intention).

**Table 1: Results of Regression Analysis between Hope and Entrepreneurial Intention.**

Independent variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Prob.	T	Prob.
Psych Hope	.928	.851	.859	2152.963	.000	47.398	.000

From Table 1, the adjusted coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) is 0.859. This implies that the independent variable (Psychological Hope) accounts for about 85.9 per cent of the variation in the dependent variable (Students' Entrepreneurial Intentions). The table above also shows that the F-calculated is 2152.963 and the corresponding significance value is 0.000 which is less than 0.01. This implies that the model is significant. The value of t-calculated is 47.398 and the corresponding significant value of 0.000 is less than 0.01. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that psychological hope plays a significant role in enhancing students' entrepreneurial intention in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria ( $t = 47.398, p < 0.01$ ).

### Plz insert the table of the results of the relationship between the dimension of hope and entrepreneurial intentions

The specific relationship between the dimensions of psychological hope and students' entrepreneurial intention in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region was also investigated. As shown in the table above, the results of data analysis illustrate that both Willpower (agency) and Way power (pathways) have a strong positive and significant influence on the students' entrepreneurial intentions in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study concludes that psychological hope (*pathways thinking* and *agency thinking*) plays a significant role in enhancing students' entrepreneurial intention in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

#### 5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Entrepreneurship is becoming a very relevant instrument to promote economic growth and development in different regional and national economies. However, there is still no consensus among social scientists on the determinants of the decision to become an entrepreneur. Therefore, there are some concerns that policies may not be sufficiently efficient in achieving this objective. From a psychological point of view, the intention to become an entrepreneur has been described as the single best predictor of actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Kolvereid, 1996).

Hence, some studies have started to analyse entrepreneurial intention and its determinants (Krueger et al., 2000) but the methodologies and research instruments used so far differ widely. It is based on this that this study examined the relationship between psychological hope and students' entrepreneurial intentions.

The finding of this study revealed a positive and significant relationship between psychological hope and students' entrepreneurial intentions in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Specifically, both Willpower (agency) and Way power (pathways) were revealed to have a positive and significant influence on the students' entrepreneurial intentions in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study concludes that psychological hope plays a significant role in enhancing students' entrepreneurial intention in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Specifically, the study concludes that *pathways thinking* and *agency thinking* play significant roles in enhancing students' entrepreneurial intention in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. These findings may be explained by the fact that at its core, willpower serves as the driving force that empowers individuals to overcome the barriers that often hinder success, such as negative thoughts, behaviours, emotions, feelings, and self-sabotage. It is the unwavering determination that propels your journey, motivating you to take the necessary actions to drive entrepreneurial intentions towards prosperity and desired outcomes. On the other hand, waypower is the unique ability to develop strategies and navigate the complex pathways from entrepreneurial intentions to prosperity, achieving set goals and desired success. It is about finding a path forward, innovating, and creating a blueprint for their dreams/intentions to become reality. As expected, the magic happens when we recognize that both willpower and waypower are born out of the symbiosis between the skills of emotional intelligence and energy management. Understanding how to channel your energy and overcome emotional obstacles becomes the secret ingredient that transforms individuals into an unstoppable force in their pursuit of entrepreneurial intentions and success. Human relations skills such as emotional intelligence can empower students to understand, manage, and leverage emotions effectively, while energy management ensures that their vitality is directed towards set goals which in this case is their entrepreneurial intentions. Mastering this fusion is not just about theoretical knowledge; it is about embodying these principles in their daily life and business practices. When you possess the ability to harmonize willpower and waypower through emotional intelligence and energy management, you become an unstoppable force. Without these strengths and knowledge, students can find themselves constrained and limited in their achievements. The transformative journey towards success requires not only action but a profound understanding of oneself and the strategic interplay between willpower and waypower.

These findings are supported by the hope theory. According to hope theory, the process of hope is cognitive; it is goal-directed *thinking*. Emotions play an important role, but cognitions are primary: thoughts regarding one's goals will determine how one feels (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1996). Besides, an individual's perception of the chances of success regarding personal goal pursuits influences subsequent emotions (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1996). Thus, positive emotions flow from perceptions of chances of successful goal pursuit, and negative emotions are the product of unsuccessful goal pursuits. Individuals with high hope tend to perceive successful

goal pursuit because they are energized to pursue them and to overcome problems that block such a process. On the contrary, individuals with low hope are more likely to perceive unsuccessful goal pursuit due to their insufficient agentic and pathway thinking, or their inability to deal with and remove blockages in goal pursuing (i.e., they are likely to experience “affective lethargy about the pursuit of goals” (Snyder, 2002: 252).

Based on the findings of this study, we make the following recommendations:

- i. firstly, the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship should take a more practical approach, away from the classrooms to instil risk-taking, goal-setting and problem-solving skills.
- ii. Secondly, the students should be told stories about the path treaded by successful entrepreneurs as this is capable of igniting the entrepreneurial spirit in them. Steps can also be taken to enable these students to interact personally with these successful entrepreneurs as a way of enhancing their hopefulness.
- iii. Thirdly, there should be greater emphasis on the teaching of business ethics as a way of promoting ethical business practices among Nigerian entrepreneurs.
- iv. Fourthly, parents, friends, relatives and others should assist the government and teachers to encourage students to embrace entrepreneurship as a viable employment option.

**APPENDIX**

<b>THE HOPE SCALE</b>						
<i>Directions:</i> Read each item carefully. Using the scale shown below, please tick the number that best describes YOU.						
S/N	Items	1 = Strongly disagree	2= Disagree	3= Not Sure/Neutral	4= Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
1.	If I should find myself in a jam at my academic work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.					
2.	At present, I am energetically pursuing my work goals.					
3.	I feel tired most of the time.					
4.	There are lots of ways around any problem that I am facing now at work.					
5.	I am easily downed in an argument.					
6.	I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.					
7.	I worry about my health.					
8.	Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.					
9.	My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.					
10.	Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work and in life.					
11.	I usually find myself worrying about something.					
12.	At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.					

*Source: Snyder et al., (1996)*



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<b>ENTERPRENUERIAL INTENTION QUESTIONNAIRE (EIQ)</b>						
<i>Directions: Read each item carefully. Using the scale shown below, please tick the number that best describes YOU.</i>						
S/N	Items	1 = Strongly disagree	2= Disagree	3= Not Sure/Neutral	4= Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
<b>Personal Attitude</b>						
<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following sentences</i>						
1.	Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me					
2.	A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me					
3.	If I had the opportunity and resources, I'd like to start a firm					
4.	Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfactions for me					
5	Among various options, I would rather be an entrepreneur					
<b>Subjective Norm</b>						
<i>If you decided to create a firm, would people in your close environment approve of that decision? Please indicate from 1 (total disapproval) to 5 (total approval).</i>						
1	Your close family					
2	Your friends					
3	Your colleagues					
<b>Perceived behavioral control</b>						
<i>To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your entrepreneurial capacity? Please value them from 1 (total disagreement) to 5 (total agreement).</i>						
1	To start a firm and keep it working would be easy for me					
2	I am prepared to start a viable firm					
3	I can control the creation process of a new firm					
4	I know the necessary practical details to start a firm					
5	I know how to develop an entrepreneurial project					
6	If I tried to start a firm, I would have a high probability of succeeding					
<b>Entrepreneurial intention</b>						
<i>Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements from 1 (total disagreement) to 5 (total agreement)</i>						
1	I am ready to do anything to be an entrepreneur					
2	My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur					
3	I will make every effort to start and run my own firm					
4	I am determined to create a firm in the future					
5	I have very seriously thought of starting a firm					
6	I have the firm intention to start a firm some day					

*Source:* Liñán, F. and Chen, Y. ("Development and cross-cultural application of a specific instrument to measure entrepreneurial intentions.")

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